

A Survey of The Knowledge of Tourists or Guests About Shariah-Compliant Homestay Facility Services in Sabah

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine tourists' or guests' knowledge of the services of Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation facilities in Sabah. This study was conducted to determine guests' knowledge about the concept of Shariah-compliant homestays, the facilities provided, and their perception of the experience of staying there. Therefore, several questions materialised, such as the extent to which tourists or guests understand the concepts and principles of Shariah-compliant homestays. This investigation was performed online (Google Survey Form) and involved 260 respondents. Data were presented as mean scores and frequencies (percentages) analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Of the 13 variables related to the knowledge of tourists or guests regarding Shariah-compliant accommodation facilities in Sabah, 12 of them reached a high level, preceded by knowledge of Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation providing the Quran, prayer rugs and Qibla direction signs with a total mean score of 4.26. Meanwhile, only one variable reached the moderate level: the knowledge of the status of the number of Shariah-compliant accommodation facilities offered in Sabah, with a mean score value of 2.96. Ultimately, the conclusions can guide homestay operators, local authorities, and other stakeholders in ameliorating guests' understanding and grasp of Sharia-compliant homestays.

Keywords: Sharia Compliant Homestay, Tourist or Guest, Facility Services, Guest Knowledge, Guest Awareness of Shariah Concepts

Introduction

Malaysia won the Best Muslim-Friendly Destination award from the Organizations of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Global Muslim Tourism Index (GMTI) 2023 report. The achievement, thus, further intensifies Malaysia's position and branding as a leader in the Islamic tourism segment and Muslim-friendly tourism and hospitality (MFTH) at the regional and international levels (Utusan Malaysia, 2023). Furthermore, Malaysia emerged as the second destination with the highest number of tourist searches in Asia in conjunction with the Chinese New Year celebration after Japan based on the search data of the global digital holiday platform Agoda (Harian, 2023). Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) reported that Malaysia also verified an exceptional performance when it managed to attract 2.12 million Muslim tourists last year, with a total expenditure of RM5.37 billion.

Generally, the tourism sector is a substantial contributor to a country's income and one of the largest sectors in the world (Balqis et al., 2019). The Sabah state government also allocated RM134.59 million to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment to relieve the impact and guarantee the healthy expansion of the tourism industry in the state, considering that the tourism sector has the potential to yield the most significant income post-pandemic, (Bernama, 2022). Thus, to fulfil a Muslim-friendly tourism experience, tourism product operators such as Shariah-compliant accommodation facilities services such as homestays must be optimally marketed. This is because Muslim tourists need high-quality tourism products and services that meet their holiday needs so that their tourism experiences are more purposeful and worthwhile as an act of devotion (Suhartanto et al., 2020).

In reality, Sabah has become a Muslim-friendly tourist destination. According to the Mastercard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel 2022 report, the number of Muslim travellers has grown, with 160 million recorded in 2019. By 2028, Muslim travel spending is expected to reach USD225 billion, with young and new generations travelling, as well as women, identified as a growing demographic in the Muslim population and acting as a driving force influencing travel (Sabah Media, 2022). In fact, Malaysia is the key destination for Muslim travellers, followed by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. This is the region that Sabah Tourism has achieved in terms of destination promotion.

Research Issues and Problems

It is necessary to remember that each individual's experience may vary and that more detailed analyses and user surveys can provide a more comprehensive picture. Nonetheless, it can be illustrated based on research that was carried out to describe several indicators in the list of issues and problems:

Facilities and Comfort

Are the facilities provided adequate and meet the standard of comfort expected by the guests?

Does compliance with Shariah principles affect the quality and accessibility of facilities?

Compliance with Shariah Principles

Do the homestay owners and staff fully understand and comply with Shariah principles?
Do non-Muslim guests feel comfortable with a Shariah-compliant accommodation experience?

Management and Services

Does the homestay management system work well?
Are there any problems related to customer service or homestay maintenance?

Suitability for International Tourists

Can Sharia-compliant homestays in Sabah attract tourists from various backgrounds and religious beliefs?
Are there challenges in meeting the needs of international tourists versus local tourists?

Prices and Costs

Is the cost of Shariah-compliant accommodation commensurate with the facilities and services provided?
Are there any problems related to the price and the value received?

Compliance with Local Laws

Does the homestay comply with local laws and regulations related to accommodation services?
Are there issues related to licenses or local regulatory compliance?

Presence of Supporting Facilities

Are there educational and informational facilities or programs for tourists or guests related to Shariah practices and customs in that place?

In addressing the above issues and problems, many tourists still need to fully understand the concept of a Shariah-compliant homestay, the principles involved, and its connection with the above issues and concerns. This can result in indecision in choosing accommodation that suits their religious needs. Next, some tourists may need to learn more about the facilities provided in Shariah-compliant homestays, such as prayer arrangements, halal food, or other rules related to Shariah principles. In addition, there is the potential for a difference between tourists' expectations and the reality of Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation. Consequently, this can be a problem if tourists are confused about what to expect from their stay experience. Similarly, tourists may need to know the benefits and advantages of staying at a Shariah-compliant homestay, such as a more conducive climate for religious practices. In addition, tourists' previous knowledge and experience can influence their perception of Shariah-compliant homestays. Therefore, this study could identify the factors that influence their views and evaluate the extent to which tourists respond to their experience at the homestay. The factors above are some of the prominent problems that could provide insight into the deconstruction of tourists' knowledge of the services of Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation facilities in Sabah.

Research Questions

- i. This analysis intended to explore the extent to which tourists or guests understand the concept of Shariah-compliant homestays in Sabah, including their awareness of Shariah principles practised in homestay accommodation.
- ii. How do tourists perceive the facilities provided in Shariah-compliant homestays, including their assessment of aspects such as prayer arrangements, halal food, and other facilities related to Shariah compliance?
- iii. What are the factors that influence the selection of Shariah-compliant homestays, including aspects such as religious background, previous knowledge and perceptions of the benefits of Shariah-compliant homestays?

Research Objectives

- i. To study the understanding of tourists or guests towards the concept of Shariah-compliant homestays in Sabah, including their level of awareness in understanding the principles of Shariah practised in homestay accommodation.
- ii. To assess tourists' perceptions of the facilities provided and identify how tourists or guests evaluate the facilities provided in Shariah-compliant homestays, including their assessment of aspects such as prayer arrangements, halal food, and other facilities related to Shariah compliance.
- iii. To identify the factors that influence the selection of Shariah-compliant homestays influencing tourists' decisions to choose them, including aspects such as religious background, previous knowledge, and perceptions of the benefits of Shariah-compliant homestays.

Background Research

The swelling demand for Shariah-compliant homestays in Sabah among Muslim tourists visiting Sabah reflects the motivation to combine tourism experiences with religious practices. Next, the growth of the tourism industry in Sabah has made it a popular destination among tourists, both locally and internationally. Based on this growth, there is room for evolving and strengthening Shariah-compliant homestays as alternative accommodation. Islamic tourism travel to Mecca to perform the Hajj and Umrah as a religious order in the fifth pillar of Islam, which is a guiding principle for determining the value of travel as tourism that upholds religious values (Henderson, 2003). The existence of Shariah-compliant accommodation services in Arab countries is one of its appealing qualities (Abdul Rahman and Hairunnizam, 2018). In addition, determining the characteristics of tourism products based on the needs of the Muslim population and the local community's culture is crucial in accommodation compliance and for the guests so that both benefit from each other (Zulaipa et al., 2022). Next, Islamic tourism is an industry connected to travelling to visit historical places, getting to know Islamic culture and heritage, and learning and experiencing the way of life of the Muslim community in the visited country (Zairin et al., 2013).

Therefore, it is indispensable to deeply comprehend the offer of Shariah-compliant homestays among tourists to avoid engaging in haram matters or being unconfident during their stay. In addition, the lack of a deep understanding of the concepts and benefits presented by accommodation can affect the primary goal of tourism as an act of worship. Consequently, the intention and methods of carrying out the journey are critical in specifying a trip's or tourism's direction (Haliza, 2018). When one travels based on the foundation of

Islamic philosophy and principles, such as taking a trip for the sake of Allah S.W.T., completing the Hajj, seeking knowledge, admiring the beauty of nature's creation by Allah S.W.T., fostering friendship, and attending work matters, it will be considered as acts of worship. Hence, a more profound understanding is needed to ensure a more meaningful travel accommodation experience.

Thus, the need to confirm the continuity of a sustainable tourism industry as an effort to make it a source of income is paramount. It includes comprehending the needs and desires of tourists to help homestay operators and stakeholders meet the demands of tourists to ensure that the economic growth of local communities continues to rise. To define, Shariah is the law, the decrees of Allah S.W.T that are assigned to humans and creatures as a whole to regulate relationships with Allah S.W.T to achieve well-being, security and peace in the world to accomplish the prosperity of eternal life in the afterlife ultimately (Jafri, 1999 in Hajar et al., 2017). Promoting religious values in the experience of Islamic tourism to Muslim tourists is an obligation in the Islamic religion as fard kifayah. In addition to gaining a more efficacious tourism experience, it can also support the development of religious values as an essential aspect in deciding the value and continuity of Islamic teachings.

Proofs From The Quran

i). Consuming Halal Food Is Mandatory

In the Quran, Allah S.W.T. mentioned: *O humanity! Eat from what is lawful and good on the earth, and do not follow Satan's footsteps. He is truly your sworn enemy.*

(Q.S Al-Baqarah 2: 168)

Verse Description

This verse highlights the significance of consuming halal and good food for the body and staying away from all actions that Shariah prohibits because they are the actions and influence of the devil. This reflects the principle in Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation, where Muslim tourists are advised to choose housing that supplies halal food and complies with all religious regulations. On the contrary, ignoring it is considered an act of disobedience or a mistake that leads to sin.

ii). Halal and Haram Matters in Islam have been clarified.

In the Quran, Allah S.W.T. mentioned: *Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, and swine; what is slaughtered in the name of any other than Allah; what is killed by strangling, beating, a fall, or by being gored to death; what is partly eaten by a predator unless you slaughter it; and what is sacrificed on altars.*

(Q.S Al-Ma'idah 5: 3)

Verse Description

This verse lists foods that are forbidden in Islam, including pork and animals slaughtered in the name of other than Allah. This principle aligns with a Shariah-compliant homestay where Muslim tourists are advised to choose accommodation that provides halal food and complies with Islamic dietary regulations.

iii). **Utilising the Favours Granted by Allah S.W.T.**

In the Quran, Allah S.W.T. mentioned: *He is the One Who produces gardens—both cultivated and wild—and palm trees, crops of different flavours, olives, and pomegranates—similar in shape, but dissimilar in taste. Eat of the fruit they bear and pay the dues at harvest, but do not waste. Surely, He does not like the wasteful.*

(Q.S Al-An'am 6: 141)

Verse Description

This verse shows Allah's various blessings, including different fruits. This verse outlines the majesty of Allah's creation and encourages people to appreciate these blessings. Therefore, it is necessary to utilise everything optimally. This is included in the context of a Shariah-compliant homestay as an accommodation that provides sound and quality food and efficient, honest, and consistent service in line with Islamic values that promote the blessings of Allah S.W.T.

iv). **Encouragement To Explore, Travel and Appreciate the Earth Created by Allah S.W.T.**

In the Quran, Allah S.W.T. mentioned: *Say, O Prophet, "Travel throughout the land and see how He originated the creation, then Allah will bring it into being one more time.*

(Q.S. Surah Al-Ankabut 29: 20)

Verse Description

This verse prompts humans to ponder and relish Allah S.W.T.'s greatness through the universe's creation. Humans are motivated to travel and explore this earth as a sign of the greatness of Allah's creation. This verse also reminds us of resurrection on the Day of Judgment - Allah will start a new creation in a different form, driving people to contemplate the afterlife and embrace it with awareness. One must be held accountable for his act on the Day of Judgement - good or bad.

In the context of Shariah-compliant homestays, this principle motivates homestay operators and their guests to relish and take care of the cleanliness and beauty of the environment. Shariah-compliant homestay operators can strive to create an atmosphere that admires Allah's creation and motivates visitors to contemplate His greatness.

v). **Encouragement to Travel the World**

In the Quran, Allah S.W.T. said: *He is the One Who smoothed out the earth for you, so move about in its regions and eat from His provisions. And to Him is the resurrection of all.*

(Q.S. Surah al-Mulk 67: 15)

Verse Description: This verse affirms that Allah created the earth with all facilities and space for humans. Humans are inspired to travel the world and enjoy the sustenance that Allah furnishes. This message underlines how merciful Allah is and reminds people to be grateful for the blessings He has given. Entrepreneurs can learn from this verse in a Shariah-compliant homestay to ensure visitors have satisfactory comfort and facilities during their stay. Furnishing adequate facilities and sound service is part of being grateful for Allah's sustenance and respecting Allah's created facilities.

Proofs From Hadiths

i). **The Importance of Maintaining Cleanliness and Beauty in Islam**

Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari (5445) and Sahih Muslim 2675). Details: In this hadith, Prophet Muhammad PBUH reminded the Muslims of the significance of caring for and choosing a clean and pure place to stay. He informed that every place where people live or spend the night must be kept clean so as not to cause damage or accident. In the context of a Shariah-compliant homestay, this principle underlines the gravity of maintaining the purity and cleanliness of the accommodation and ensuring it is a safe place and restful surroundings for visitors.

ii). **The Importance of Choosing Halal Place to Stay and Accommodation**

Reference: Sunan Ibn Majah 3194. Details: This hadith underlines that when one is on a journey, he is in religious responsibility (amanah). Therefore, in determining a place to stay, one needs to ensure that it is a place that complies with Islamic principles, including Shariah principles. Shariah-compliant homestays underscore the essence of accommodation that complies with religious rules regarding food, prayer, and other codes. Therefore, this principle encourages tourists or guests to choose Shariah-compliant travel accommodations.

iii). **The Importance of Honest and Fair in All Matters**

Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab Al-Buyu' (Chapter Al-Ghishsh), Hadith 1938

Details: This hadith is recorded in Sahih al-Bukhari, in Kitab Al-Buyu' (Chapter Al-Ghishsh). This hadith is included among the hadiths known as hasan (good) or sahih (authentic) hadith. This hadith emphasises the gravity of honesty and forbids cheating.

Scholars' Views: Imam Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 AD) was a great Muslim scholar and philosopher. He underlined the essence of maintaining the journey according to the principles of Shariah in his literary works. According to him, travel is an opportunity to test one's faith and practice. In his book "Ihya' Ulum al-Din" (The Revival of Religious Sciences), Al-Ghazali suggested that society should always be attentive to aspects such as avoiding immorality, maintaining obligatory prayers, respecting holy places, keeping morals and doing good when travelling. This statement can be found in the first volume of this book, in the section that discusses "Kitab Adab al-Safar" or Travel Ethics.

Research Methodology

This study operated a quantitative approach, descriptive research in the form of a survey of tourists or guests. The survey method intended to identify the extent of their knowledge of the Shariah-compliant accommodation facility services available in Sabah. It applied especially to the homestay type. This analysis involved 260 respondents, and sample selection was made based on simple random sampling. Kerlinger and Lee (2002) remarked that the minimum number of samples in quantitative research is 30 people. Hence, the total of 260 respondents in this study was sufficient.

The quantitative method was through the distribution of questionnaires constructed using Google Forms and distributed through the telecommunication medium WhatsApp, which was chosen as a research instrument. It intended to obtain research data more efficiently without attending any fieldwork and without using conventional methods by filling out questionnaires manually. The formation of the questionnaire and the improvement of the set of questions

adapted from the study carried out by Mohammad Azizol and Mohamad Saifudin (2019) in the article 'Survey on Knowledge, Acceptance and Constraints of Tourists Towards Shariah Compliant Hotel Services in Malaysia'. Nonetheless, this paper solely focused on the context of homestays operating in Sabah.

Findings

This section will report the research outcomes of this study. The data obtained through the Google Forms was then analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software in a descriptive analysis (frequency) and determination of the Likert scale (mean score). Table 1 is a detailed profile of the respondents involved in this survey.

Table 1
Profile of Respondents

Attributes	Total (N: 260 Respondents)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	92	35.4 %
Female	168	64.6 %
Race		
Sabah Bumiputera	160	61.5 %
Malay	60	23.1 %
Others	40	15.4 %
Religion		
Islam	230	88.5 %
Christian	30	11.5 %
Age		
20 to 30 years old	130	50.0 %
31 to 40 years old	90	34.6 %
41 years old and above	40	15.4 %
Occupation		
Student	106	40.8 %
Private sector	82	31.5 %
Government sector	42	16.2 %
Unemployed	20	7.7 %
Freelance	10	3.8 %
Educational Level		
University	100	38.5 %
Diploma	90	34.6 %
Secondary School	70	26.9 %

Source: Researchers (2023)

The following section is the data collection for the knowledge of tourists or guests regarding the Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation facilities in Sabah. Table 2 shows the interpretation of the mean score of the four-point Likert scale.

Knowledge of Tourists or Guests About Shariah-compliant Homestay Accommodation Facilities in Sabah

Table 2

Interpretation of the Mean Score of the Four-Point Likert Scale

Mean Score	Level
1.00 to 1.50	Insignificant
1.51 to 2.50	Low
2.51 to 3.50	Moderate
3.51 to 5.00	High

Source: Riduwan (2012)

The researchers categorised the Likert scale classification into four levels. Data interpretation gives meaning and significance to the analysis of research data obtained (Norazizah et al., 2022). Thus, interpreting this mean score will explain the level of each variable analysed according to priority, from high to low. Meanwhile, Table 3 shows the research findings from the analysis of the mean score on the variables of the level of knowledge about the accommodation facilities of Shariah-compliant homestays in Sabah. The determination of the Likert scale is 1- Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, and 5- Strongly agree.

Table 3

Knowledge of Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Facilities in Sabah

Attributes	Mean Score
Many homestay accommodation facilities in Sabah have Shariah-compliant status.	2.96
Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation provides halal food and drinks	4.15
Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation dedicates a unique worship space within the premises	4
Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation requires tourists/guests to dress modestly	4.03
Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation does not provide alcohol to tourists/guests.	4.15
Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation does not adopt a usury payment system.	4.23
Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation does not allow gambling activities on the premises.	4.23
Shariah-compliant homestays separate rooms for unmarried male and female couples	4.19
Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation has a Shariah advisory panel or a religious official who monitors halal activities on the premises	3.80
Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation provides the Quran, prayer mats and Qibla direction signs	4.26
Bed and toilet positions in Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation do not face the Qibla	3.69
Information regarding Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation facilities is widely distributed on the internet	3.84
Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation is fully booked in the month of Ramadhan	3.88

N : 260 respondents

Source : Field Research (2023)

The analysis of the mean score shown in Table 3 shows that out of 13 variables related to the knowledge of tourists or guests regarding Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation facilities in Sabah, 12 of them reached a high level, preceded by knowledge of Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation providing the Quran, prayer mat and Qibla direction sign with a total mean score (4.26) which of 70 people, (26.9%) expressed a neutral response, 50 people (19.2%) agreed and 140 people (53.8%) strongly agreed. Meanwhile, only one variable reached the moderate level of knowledge: the status of the number of Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation facilities offered in Sabah with a mean score value (2.96), which of 70 respondents (26.9%) disagreed, 150 people (57.7%) answered as neutral, and 20 people (7.7%) agreed and strongly agreed.

Discussion

This section contains the details related to the study data findings, as shown in Table 3.

Many Homestay Accommodation Facilities With Shariah-Compliant Status In Sabah

The result of the mean score for respondents' knowledge of homestay accommodation facilities with Sharia-compliant status in Sabah was (2.96) and reached a moderate level. According to Suhailah et al (2022), the central objective of providing Shariah-compliant accommodation is to achieve the pleasure of Allah S.W.T., which is in line with the primary goal of the Shariah concept. It is for one to do 'amar makruf nahi mungkar' (enjoining right and forbidding wrong). It pushes one to examine a matter's interests, whether it leads to mafsada (damage) or maslaha (interests) to oneself and others. Nonetheless, based on the literature review of past research materials and information from the ministry, specific data must be collected regarding the number of Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation facilities in Sabah or the whole of Malaysia. Based on data recorded by the Homestay Unit (MOTAC), the number of registered homestay operators for Sabah is 391, with 31 homestays registered in 2022. This number is not included in the list of unregistered private homestays under MOTAC. Jabil et al (2020) stated that private (commercial) homestay facilities are essential alternatives to accommodate the increasing number of tourists, especially in Sabah. Accordingly, the income performance of the homestay experience program in Sabah recorded a total income of RM 8,113,591.87 in the same year.

In the Quran, Allah S.W.T mentioned: "*Allāh does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with what we cannot bear. And pardon us, and forgive us, and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people."*

(Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2: 286)

Verse description: Allah, who is The Most Merciful, does not exert a burden that exceeds a person's ability. Allah understands human limitations and will not burden someone with tests they cannot bear. This is related to lodging and accommodation compliance with Shariah in several methods. Each will provide convenience and comfort to the guests according to their capability. The facilities, rules, and services furnished at this homestay will be revised to avoid

burdening the guests and operators. Islam's principles of justice and humanity will uphold these values by not burdening the guests with excessive rules that can complicate them.

Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Provides Halal Food and Drinks

Respondents' knowledge of the need to provide halal food and drinks in Shariah-compliant homestay accommodations recorded a mean score (4.15) and reached a high level. According to Fiteri and Masnisah (2014), the source of halal food and drink is a sensitive issue among Muslim tourists. For example, ambiguous terms such as 'Serve no Pork' or 'Muslim Meal' confuse them about the purity status. Izreen et al (2018) explained that Islam has encouraged its followers to choose healthy, clean, and halal food while empowering the halal concept that follows Shariah law in everyday life. Shariah law is implemented based on the Quran, Sunnah, consensus between Islamic ruling experts (ijma'), and analogy (qiyas) according to mature logic (ijtihad). In the Quran, Allah S.W.T. says: *Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, and swine; what is slaughtered in the name of any other than Allah; what is killed by strangling, beating, a fall, or by being gored to death; what is partly eaten by a predator unless you slaughter it; and what is sacrificed on altars.*

(Q.S Al-Ma'idah 5: 3)

Verse Description: This verse lists foods that are forbidden in Islam, including pork and animals slaughtered in the name of other than Allah. This principle aligns with a Shariah-compliant homestay where Muslim tourists are reminded to choose accommodation that provides halal food and complies with Islamic dietary regulations.

Shariah-compliant homestay Accommodation Provides a Special Worship Room on the Premises

The mean score of respondents' knowledge regarding providing unique worship spaces in accommodation premises was (4.00) and reached a high level. The homestay accommodation operator should be able to offer a particular worship room in the accommodation room or musalla in a public place, with a place for ablution (Najahudin et al., 2010). This is also intended to satisfy the Muslim-friendly concept of employees and customers praying five times daily in a congregation in a comfortable room. This room must also have a prayer mat, telekung (prayer attire for women), ketayap, or tasbeeh for worshipers.

Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Requires Tourists Or Guests To Dress Politely

Respondents' knowledge regarding the need for tourists or guests to dress modestly when on accommodation premises, especially in public areas, was high, with a mean score of 4.03. According to Siti Noorbiah and Najahudin (2012), Muslim-friendly accommodation is also required to promote a dress code that is in line with Islam. Hence, every Muslim employee must wear Islamic clothing that covers the awrah, neither too tight nor too loose, and the colour of clothes and perfumes is reasonable. As Allah S.W.T mentions:

Translation: *“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze, guard their chastity, and not reveal their adornments¹ except what normally appears. Let them draw their veils over their chests and not reveal their hidden adornments except to their husbands, their fathers, their fathers-in-law, their sons, their stepsons, their brothers, their brothers' sons or sisters' sons, their fellow women, those bondwomen in their possession, male attendants with no desire, or*

children who are still unaware of women's nakedness. Let them not stomp their feet, drawing attention to their hidden adornments."

(Surah Al Nur, Ayat 24:31)

Verse Description: This verse discusses protecting private parts and its importance for Muslim women. This also applies when women are in accommodations such as homestays. The female guests at the Shariah-compliant homestay should make sure that they comply with the principle of protecting their private parts appropriately in their dress and behaviour. In addition, guarding the view in the verse above also teaches women to lower their gaze. Similarly, guests at the homestay are expected to respect others' privacy. This is vital to create a comfortable and respectful environment in the homestay. The female guests should choose appropriate clothes and follow the values of the Islamic religion.

Shariah-Compliant Accommodation Does Not Provide Alcohol to Tourists Or Guests

Next, the data of knowledge regarding the prohibition of providing alcohol to tourists or those staying in Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation premises was also high, with a mean score of 4.15. Haram food or drinks such as alcohol cannot be served to all customers, regardless of whether they are Muslim or not (Siti Noorbiah and Najahudin, 2012). In the book *Fiqh al-Manhaji* (3/75-81), the author explains the status of alcohol in Islam. It is forbidden to drink intoxicating drinks, whether alcohol (خمر), i.e. made from grape juice or not alcohol, i.e. made from other things. Allah S.W.T mentions:

Translation: *"O believers! Intoxicants, gambling, idols, and drawing lots for decisions are all evil of Satan's handiwork. So shun them so you may be successful."*

(Surah al-Maidah, Verse 5:90)

Verse Description: This verse strictly prohibits drinking alcohol of any kind that can cause intoxication and harm. In the context of staying at a Shariah-compliant homestay, one is expected to comply with this prohibition by not consuming alcoholic beverages, both inside and outside the accommodation. This is because the principle of accommodation has adhered to the values of Islamic Shariah in all aspects, including providing an environment free from haram practices. Hence, the act of drinking alcohol while staying there contradicts Islamic religious values and is also an act that violates the integrity of values.

Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Does Not Practice Usury Payment System

The study's conclusions regarding respondents' knowledge of the prohibition of interest-based payment systems in Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation premises were also high, with a mean score of 4.23. Islam strongly encourages its followers to always take financial management seriously per Shariah and gain Allah S.W.T's pleasure (Che Adenan et al., 2022). Allah S.W.T. mentions:

Translation: *"O believers! Fear Allah, and give up outstanding interest if you are a true believer. If you do not, beware of a war with Allah and His Messenger! But if you repent, you may retain your principal—neither inflicting nor suffering harm."*

(Al-Baqarah 2: 278 - 279)

Verse Description: This verse addresses the prohibition of interest-based payment in transactions. In the context of staying at a homestay, guests are expected to avoid usury transactions, whether in the form of borrowing money with interest or other transactions nurturing usury. One needs to strive to maintain the integrity of transactions per Islamic principles. It is to provide an experience that is more consistent with Islamic principles.

Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Does Not Allow Gambling Activities On The Premises

Respondents' knowledge of the prohibition of gambling activities in homestay accommodation premises was also high, with a mean score of 4.23. Islam prohibits every game with the element of gambling that causes profit for one party and loss for the other party. *Maysir* and *qimar* are two phrases in Arabic that have the same meaning: gambling (Azlin and Nurul Ilyana, 2017). *Maysir* is haram; even if a business deal or contract is involved with it, the sale will become invalid in Islam. Allah S.W.T. mentions:

Translation: *"O believers! Intoxicants, gambling, idols, and drawing lots for decisions are all evil of Satan's handiwork. So shun them so you may be successful."*

(Surah Al-Ma'idah: 5: 90)

Verse Description: This verse addresses the prohibition of gambling and *azlam*. It strictly prohibits the practice of gambling and drinking alcohol. In a Shariah-compliant homestay, this prohibition will include various forms of gambling, such as playing poker cards or games that include betting money. Shariah-compliant homestays will ban facilities or activities related to gambling. *Maisir* is a term used in the Quran to refer to the practices of gambling and games that contain components of betting or ambiguous profit. Shariah-compliant homestays will ensure that guests do not engage in such matters so that the accommodation environment remains by Islamic moral and ethical values. This includes avoiding behaviours forbidden by Allah, such as gambling and consuming alcohol. The operator must try to create an Islamic environment, per the teachings of the Islamic religion, to provide a stay experience that is in line with religious principles.

Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Separate Rooms for Unmarried Male and Female Couples

The mean score for the respondent's knowledge regarding room separation for unmarried couples was also high, at 4.19. Accommodation premises must ensure that the male and female couples staying are married or have legitimate relationships. Those who are not married and not mahram are not allowed to stay together in the same room. This is also to avoid adultery, which is strictly forbidden in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad SAW states:

Translation: *"A woman should not travel except with a mahram."*

(Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith, Hadith no. 186).

The description of the Hadith comes from Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Adab (Chapter: Traveling), Hadith no. 1865, orders that a woman should not undertake a long journey without being accompanied by a mahram, that is, a family member who has a very close relationship and is allowed to attend the woman on the trip. In the context of guests staying at Shariah-compliant

homestay accommodation, the principles of protection and security emphasised by the hadith are still relevant. Shariah-compliant Muslim accommodation usually has rules and norms that respect religious and moral principles. Muslim women who travel and need a place to stay will feel safer and more comfortable if they stay at a homestay that upholds religious values. Shariah-compliant homestays provide a safer and more secure environment, especially for women who travel alone or with other female friends. This is in line with the principle in the hadith, which emphasises the need to be accompanied by a mahram when travelling. Shariah-compliant homestays can also promote Islamic norms and ensure proper supervision. In a hadith narrated by Ibn 'Abbas, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH says:

Translation: *A man and a woman must not stay alone, unaccompanied (ajnabi) unless the one with the woman is mahram.*

Hadith narrated by Muslim: (1341)

Imam al-Nawawi narrated this hadith, saying that if a man and a woman with no legitimate bond stay together and no third person accompanies them, then it is not permissible, as per the consensus of the scholars (Refer to al-Minhaj Syarh Sahih al-Muslim Lin Nawawi, 9:109)

Shariah-compliant Homestay Accommodation Has A Shariah Advisory Panel Or A Religious Officer Who Monitors Halal Activities on the Premises

Based on the study's findings, respondents' knowledge was high about needing a Shariah advisory panel or religious officer to control all activities on the premises (3.80). However, until now, there has yet to be a religious officer or Islamic affairs officer position to manage matters involving religion in accommodation premises such as hotels and chalets, including homestays (Azam, 2021).

Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Provides the Quran, Prayer Mat and Qibla Direction Sign

The mean score regarding the respondents' knowledge regarding the preparation of the Quran, prayer rugs and Qibla direction signs in the homestay accommodation premises was the highest (4.26) among all the attributes highlighted. A study carried out by Suhailah et al. (2022) verified that homestay operators in Sabah, such as the ones in Kota Kinabalu, Kundasang, and Semporna, also serve the Muslim guests with facilities such as qibla direction signs, prayer mats and telekung and public surau to help guests worship comfortably. According to Borhanudin (2021), the Qibla direction sign and the Quran must be placed in every room. This allows the guests to conduct their worship as Muslims. Further, the management team must ensure that no photographs are hung in the worship space as it may disturb the focus of a person's prayer. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH said:

Translation: *"Indeed, angels will not enter a house with dogs and pictures (statues)."*

(Reviewed by Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmizi dan Ibnu Majah)

Position of Beds and Toilets in Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation By Not Facing the Qibla

Next, the mean score for respondents' knowledge about the position of beds and toilets in Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation not facing the Qibla was also high (3.69). One

of the substantial components of Islamic tourism in the halal and Shariah-compliant component in a halal hotel is the position of the bed and the toilet not facing the Qibla (Mohammad Imran et al., 2020). Ideally, the bed must be placed where the head faces the Qibla, and the feet are in the opposite direction. Accommodation operators should avoid placing beds where the feet will face the direction of the Qibla when sleeping as a sign of respect. One is also inspired to sleep on the right side according to the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. The room for prayer also needs to be positioned well by not facing the toilet or the entrance because it can distract one when he performs the prayer. Ideally, the prayer room should face a wall or have a barrier (sutrah) so that it does not work as a path for people to walk in.

Information Regarding Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Facilities is Widely Distributed on The Internet

The response to the knowledge regarding the information about homestay accommodation that is widely distributed on the internet was also high (3.84). The internet plays a role in personal use and is also commonly used in various types of businesses, including marketing tourism products such as accommodation facilities (Noraihan and Sobhi, 2014). Nur Ain et al (2020) communicated that more than 400 million people are estimated to use the internet daily to search for information and social media. Tourism product operators increasingly use digital marketing techniques as one of the most effective ways to increase sales and reach market targets. Using digital marketing platforms, tourism product entrepreneurs can reach a wider audience at a lower cost than traditional marketing.

Shariah-Compliant Homestay Accommodation Gets Fully Booked In The Month Of Ramadhan

Next, it is a research finding that the respondents' knowledge of Shariah-compliant homestay accommodation is fully booked during Ramadhan, with a mean score of (3.88). However, only large-scale hotel accommodations provide buffet-style iftar packages during Ramadan to meet customers demands other than hotel guests. Aam et al. (2022) explained that Muslim-friendly hotels that provide halal services are not only limited to serving halal food and drinks but also refer to operations throughout the hotel that are managed based on Islamic principles, including providing facilities to tourists throughout the month of Ramadan, namely the Ramadan buffet (iftar) and early morning breakfast (suhor).

Conclusion

There is an elevation in demand from tourists or Muslim guests looking for accommodation that complies with Shariah principles when visiting Sabah. This stimulates the desire to combine tourism experiences with religious practices. Although there has been an increase in the offering of Shariah-compliant homestays, tourists or guests still need to understand the concept and benefits offered. A more profound familiarity is imperative to ensure a meaningful stay experience. For Muslim tourists, a tourism experience that supports religious values is a critical aspect. Shariah-compliant homestays in Sabah can enable and reinforce the understanding and practice of spiritual values in the tourism experience. In an attempt to make the tourism industry a sustainable source of income, it is paramount to understand the needs and expectations of tourists. Shariah-compliant homestays can provide accommodation alternatives that meet the demands of tourists who want to travel in compliance with religious principles. Furthermore, there is a need to increase tourists' or

guests' awareness of the concept of Shariah-compliant homestay, its benefits, and the importance of respecting Islamic norms and ethics when staying at the accommodation. Next, it can address the knowledge gaps and reinforce the services' wisdom. Ergo, it is imperative to note that Shariah-compliant homestays in Sabah maintain great potential to meet the needs of tourists or guests who prioritise an accommodation experience following religious values. Efforts to enhance understanding, promotion, and quality of service can positively drive the tourism industry and individuals seeking experiences that align with Shariah principles.

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